

Project Report: Three collections of Malay letters and manuscripts: Publishing the Written Heritage of the Malay Islamic State

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The project of 2009-2010 touched on the problems of the Islamic written heritage of the Malay part of the Islamic world, particularly on three infamous collections of Malay letters and manuscripts, which are being preserved now in Russia (St.Petersburg) and Indonesia (Java, Western Sumatra).

1. The collection of Malay letters of the Dutch East Indian Company (VOC) previously belonged to the famous collector and scholar of the Russian Empire N.P. Likhachev (1862 – 1936), and are now preserved in St. Petersburg's Institute of Oriental Manuscripts. The collection consists of 54 official letters dating back to the 17th-18th centuries, and written in languages including Malay (Jawi, Pegon), Javanese, Old Dutch, Spanish and Chinese. They were written by sultans and other dignitaries from different Malay states such as Banten, Cirebon, Palembang, Goa, Bima, Bone and Malacca, and almost all of them were addressed to the governor-general of Dutch India, Joan van Hoorn (1704 -1709).

2. The collection of manuscripts of Keraton Kasepuhan in Cirebon (Java) are written in Malay, Arabic and Javanese, and deal with Islamic theology, history of Islam and the doctrines of several Sufi brotherhoods (Shattariyah, Naqshbandiyah and local Javanese *tariqas*).

3. The private collection of manuscripts dealing with the Sammaniyah *tariqah* – located near Bukittinggi, Western Sumatra

The work of the project was supposed to be held in different places and combined various kinds of work, including travelling and field research work in Indonesia.

1) Research work in the archives and libraries of Jakarta and St. Petersburg, including:

- National Archive of Indonesia
- National Library of Jakarta
- Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg
- St. Petersburg Public Library

2) Fieldwork in Indonesia (Java):

- Library of Keraton Kasepuhan (palace), Cirebon: preliminary investigation of the Sultan's library. The main goal of this work was the investigation of further opportunities for work in Keraton's library with its almost infamous collection of Islamic manuscripts in Malay, Arabic and Javanese.

3) Digitizing one manuscript from a private collection of manuscripts dealing with the doctrine of Sammaniyah Sufi brotherhood in Western Sumatra (Bukittinggi).

Outcome

As a result of the grant work the article *The Unknown collection of Malay Sultanates Letters of the XVII-XVIII centuries from St.Petersburg* was written, supplied with 15 images. It will be published in the Islamic Manuscript Association's Journal of Islamic Manuscripts in 2013.